

Dear JSS Community,

I was just in the conference room getting dinner from the candy basket. I love going in there because candy basket, but also because it reminds me of my interview in the spring of 2019 to become a 5th grade teacher here. As I was inhaling my 27th Reese's Peanut Butter Cup, I thought, "If I had time to slow down, I'd linger in the gratitude I feel about how much has changed so beautifully for me this year."

Hmm.

The first day of school is always met with a huge amount of nervous anticipation. As a new teacher, I felt immense pressure to make the first day perfect; to make every second with my new class a microcosm of all the fabulousness ahead. As I got deeper into my career, though, I realized that a carefully produced, tightly scheduled, perfect first day of school is not a wise aspiration. The authentic first day microcosm is one in which I forgot to make copies. It's one where my cute shoes are giving me blisters, and I choose to do the day barefoot. It's one where I find a dead mouse behind a bookshelf two minutes before picking up my kids. It's a day where we laugh, snack, play, and begin to get to know each other. Importantly, though, it's a day where I am transparent with my students about the mishaps and about how I choose to frame them to myself. Forgotten copies? That's okay, so much of the day went well, and we can do that work tomorrow. We have time. Bare feet my first day at a new school? What a wacky story to write about later! Our outfits do not reflect our value. Dead mouse stinking up the classroom? Get out the magnifying glasses, and let's make friends with our custodian, who does so much hard work for our community.

This first day of school is no different. All of us on every side of this thing have put in a ton of work to make the day a success, but one of the true marks of a successful first day is being able to model for our children how we roll with the inevitable bumps. It's being able to model for our children how we orient ourselves to a huge amount of nervous anticipation, or to any challenging situation.

Let's all remember to slow down enough to linger in this moment and be who we want to be for our kids. Let's invite them into the way we talk to ourselves about challenging moments to strengthen their inner voices and reinforce our own. Sniff their little heads while they sleep, and let yourself linger in the most important feeling of all.

Love,

Lauren